

Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Western District of Michigan

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Monday, September 4, 2017

18 Defendants Facing Federal Charges For Drug Trafficking

***AGENTS SEIZE OVER 30 KILOGRAMS OF DRUGS AND APPROXIMATELY A
MILLION DOLLARS ONE DEFENDANT SHOT DURING TAKE DOWN***

GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN – Acting U.S. Attorney Andrew Birge announced that his office sought, and U.S. Magistrate Judge Phillip J. Green issued last Friday and earlier today, arrest warrants for eighteen separate defendants charged by criminal complaint with conspiring to distribute heroin and cocaine in the areas of Grand Rapids and Benton Harbor, Michigan. The affidavit filed in support of the complaint alleges that the drugs were trafficked into West Michigan by semi-tractor trailer from California.

During the arrests of the defendants and execution of associated searches, federal, state and local investigators seized over 30 kilograms of heroin and cocaine, multiple pounds of marijuana, two kilogram presses, approximately \$1,000,000, a bullet-proof vest, three handguns and an assault rifle with an extended magazine. One defendant suffered a gunshot wound in the course of the execution of the arrests and searches. He will appear for proceedings as his condition allows.

Further details of the allegations may be found in the attached complaint and 185-page supporting affidavit, which were unsealed at the initial appearance of eleven of the defendants today. A twelfth defendant, Phillip Nelson, made his initial appearance in Chicago, in the Northern District of Illinois.

The charges are the result of a multi-agency Federal, State and local law enforcement investigation into the conspiracy. The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), Internal Revenue Service (IRS), Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Vice Unit of the Grand Rapids Police Department (GRPD), Kent County Sheriff's Department (KCSO), Wyoming Police Department, Michigan State Police (MSP), Kent Area Narcotics Enforcement Team (KANET), Metropolitan Enforcement Team (MET), U.S. Secret Service (USSS), Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms (ATF), Kalamazoo Valley Enforcement Team (KVET), Albion P.D., Calhoun County Sheriff Department, and South West Enforcement Team (SWET) have all supported the investigation.

The charges in the complaint, which carry varying maximum penalties of up to 20 years or life in prison, depending on the allegations against the individual defendant, are merely accusations and are not evidence of guilt. The defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty in a court of law. The government has the burden of proving guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.